



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2012

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DON'T LET SPRING CLEANING BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

Don't Sweep or Vacuum if you Find Rodent Infestations; Use "Wet Cleaning" Methods Instead

Spring is in the air and you may be thinking of opening up your mountain cabin, cleaning out the garage or that backyard shed. But be careful if you find evidence of unwanted visitors. Eight mice in Santee, Tierrasanta and Escondido have just tested positive for the potentially-deadly hantavirus.

"The most important thing people should remember if they find a rodent infestation is, don't sweep or vacuum," said Jack Miller, director of the County Department of Environmental Health. "People contract hantavirus by inhaling virus particles that can be stirred up in the air. So use a mixture of bleach and water or some other full strength disinfectant to clean up instead."

Mice and rodents that carry hantavirus in the wild rarely pose a danger to people. But hantavirus is prevalent in San Diego County and people should be careful if they find infestations in their homes, garages, cabins and sheds.

People who are exposed to hantavirus can develop hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), which begins with flu-like symptoms, and can escalate into severe breathing difficulties and even death. There is no treatment, vaccine or cure for hantavirus infections, which are deadly in 36 percent of cases, according to the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

When opening cabins for the season, open doors and windows to ventilate the area for at least 30 minutes. The best way for people to prevent themselves from being exposed to the disease is to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds by sealing holes larger than the size of a dime.

For more information contact the County Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 or visit <http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/deh/pests/hantavirus.html>. Watch: "[Hantavirus - The Airborne Menace](#)."

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How to Avoid Exposure to Hantavirus:

- Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.
- Avoid rodent infested areas. Do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with feces and urine.
- Clean up rodent droppings and urine using the wet cleaning method described below.

Use “Wet-Cleaning” Methods To Prevent Inhaling The Virus:

- **DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM INFESTED AREAS.**
- Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup of water), or other full strength disinfectant onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding areas and let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning. Clean with a sponge or a mop.
- Place disinfected rodents and debris into two plastic bags, seal them and discard in the trash.
- Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method. Thoroughly wash your bare hands with soap and water.

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